

Gaslit Nation // Transcript  
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"Voldemort Putin"

Adam Schiff: Colonel Vindman said, "Here, right matters. Here, right matters." Well, let me tell you something. If right doesn't matter, if right doesn't matter, it doesn't matter how good the Constitution is. It doesn't matter how brilliant the framers were. It doesn't matter how good or bad our advocacy in this trial is. It doesn't matter how well written the oath of impartiality is. If right doesn't matter, we're lost. If the truth doesn't matter, we're lost. Framers couldn't protect us from ourselves if right and truth don't matter. And you know that what he did was not right.

Adam Schiff: That's what they do in the old country, that Colonel Vindman's father came from, or the old country that my great grandfather came from, or the old countries that your ancestors came from, or maybe you came from. But here, right is supposed to matter. It's what's made us the greatest nation on Earth. No Constitution can protect us. Right doesn't matter anymore. And you know you can't trust this President. Do what's right for this country.

Adam Schiff: You can trust he will do what's right for Donald Trump. He'll do it now. He's done it before. He'll do it for the next several months. He'll do it in the election if he's allowed to. This is why if you find him guilty, you must find that he should be removed because right matters, because right matters and the truth matters. Otherwise, we are lost.

Sarah Kendzior: I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestselling essay collection, *The View From Flyover Country*, and the upcoming book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Andrea Chalupa: I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker, and the writer and producer of the upcoming journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*.

Sarah Kendzior: And this is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump Administration and rising autocracy around the world. So as Trump was impeached in the house and is now having his trial held in the Senate. People are discussing this trial as a matter of law, but it's really a matter of power. The trial is a loyalty test for Republicans. It's a test of whether they'll openly declare fealty toward a criminal syndicate represented by a team of lawyers who have themselves been accused of crimes. It's a test of whether they will obey their own abusers because Trump and his goons have threatened a number of Republican Representatives as well.

Sarah Kendzior: According to CBS, Trump recently proclaimed that any GOP Senator who votes against him will have their head on a pike. Most of all, it's an attack on institutional integrity, on the institution of law itself. There is no miraculous presentation of evidence that will move the GOP. We know this because Trump himself has openly committed crimes and even confessed to his crimes. The way that Trump gets out of crimes is by declaring them not to be crimes, not by

actually proving his innocence. We are living in a kleptocracy and the Democrats are fighting as if they are still in a democracy, and that means the Democrats are bringing the wrong set of expectations into this fight.

Sarah Kendzior: For the Democrats, the trial is a struggle against the formalization of the dictatorship to which Trump has always aspired and it's one that they are waging too late. Even though some, like Adam Schiff, are waging it very well. But Americans have lost a lot since November 2016 and much of that loss was due to unwarranted faith in rotting institutions that officials have exhibited. Savior syndrome as they waited for Mueller and normalcy bias as they assumed that if the situation were really so dangerous, someone surely would step in and stop it. That someone was supposed to be them.

Sarah Kendzior: It would be beneficial if both the Democrats legal team and the American legal analysts who are providing much of the commentary on TV and Twitter were versed at all in how law works in authoritarian states because that is a far better analog to what we're seeing than any past American impeachment. This trial is abuse as spectacle, an open power struggle that has little to do with the law and paper. This is not how it should be, but in order to prevent the integrity of law from further eroding, people need to recognize that this is in fact what it is.

Sarah Kendzior: Back in 2012, I wrote an essay called, "We're Following the Laws Radical", which is in my book, *The View From Flyover Country*. The essay is about a group of lawyers from Uzbekistan and authoritarian states in Central Asia whose insistence that Uzbekistan officials follow the law was viewed as subversive. The same way that that's happening in the US.

Sarah Kendzior: I'm going to read two paragraphs of this essay to give you a small taste of what law means in a dictatorship. Uzbek legal language implies that justice is an arbitrary construct. In layman's terms, a defense attorney is an oqartiruvchi, literally a whitener. And a prosecutor is a qoraytiruvchi, or darkener. Uzbek lawyers whiten or darken the aybdor, a term which means the defendant but literally translates as "the guilty one". Justice is reduced to theatrical and spin fodder for jokes and sarcasm, the grim practices of Uzbekistan's legal system underlying this fact.

Sarah Kendzior: One Uzbek former state official, when I asked him to define guilt, told me to look up "suspicious" because he said, and I quote, "In reality, suspicious is the same as guilty." He went on to write, "Uzbekistan is one of many states in Central Asia where the rule of law has eroded." This is not to say that these states are unstable. The cruel irony of illegality in Central Asia is that it is a stabilizing force. In Uzbekistan, corruption at the state level is so pervasive that contesting state crimes is extremely difficult.

Sarah Kendzior: Corruption at the local level is so rampant that it's led to apathy among citizens who are often unaware of their rights. But the existence of those rights raises an interesting question. What if people retain their faith in law after they lost their faith in government? What if citizens took the law at its word? And so that's the

set of expectations that Americans need to have now. They should assume that corrupt officials will not follow the law, but they must insist endlessly that they do.

Sarah Kendzior: Keep your expectations high. Even if you assume they will not be met. There is a tightrope to walk between clear-eyed realism and cynicism just as there is one between hope and blind faith. If you study authoritarian states, you will learn how to walk this fine line.

Adam Schiff: Yeah, I mean this is what wannabe authoritarianism looks like. It's the same playbook across history, across regions. It's just power for power's sake and a great illustration of that in terms of the Republican's brazen hypocrisy was presented in the Senate chamber by Representative Jerry Nadler of New York.

Jerry Nadler: And I might say the same thing of then-House Manager, Lindsey Graham, who in President Clinton's trial flatly rejected the notion that impeachable offenses are limited to violations of established law. Here is what he said...

Lindsey Graham: What's a high crime? How about if an important person hurt somebody of low means? It's not very scholarly, but I think it's the truth. I think that's what they meant by high crimes. It doesn't even have to be a crime. It's just when you start using your office and you're acting in a way that hurts people, you've committed a higher crime.

Jerry Nadler: There are many reasons why high crimes and misdemeanors are not and cannot be limited to violations of the criminal code. We address them at length in the briefs we have filed and the report of the House Judiciary Committee respecting these Articles of Impeachment.

Andrea Chalupa: All this reminds me, I had an incredible interview with Oleg Sentsov, who was the rising star Ukrainian filmmaker who was kidnapped from Crimea for his pro democracy activism during Putin's invasion. He was kidnapped by Russian forces and taken to Russia, put on a show trial, an actual show trial, and given 20 or so years in a Siberian prison where he was essentially sent to die. And there was a massive outcry, especially among leading filmmakers around the world, demanding his freedom. And amazingly, he finally was freed in a major prisoner swap between Russia and Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa: As soon as he arrived in New York the other week, as soon as he arrived in the US, I was his very first stop. Not because he was eager to see me by any means. I was eager to see him, so I asked a wonderful friend of mine at PEN America, the organization that's done some of the bravest work and demanding his release, if I could chat with him for Gaslit Nation and we'll be playing that interview soon. But one thing that will make sense, I've said, I was asking him about what prison was like, what the guards were like, and his answer was incredibly chilling because his answer includes all of us.

Andrea Chalupa: He described his time in a Russian penal colony as being like the Stanford prison experiment. Power for the sake of power can happen anywhere, even in a mundane setting. While the Stanford prison experiment, there have been some... It's become more of like a pop culture reference because it does fall short scientifically here and there, it's been revealed, but it still stands as a demonstration of the choices people make when there's power at stake. The point that Oleg Sentsov made about a Russian Gulag of today is that the elements of authoritarianism can exist anywhere.

Andrea Chalupa: No one is immune to it. And so what you're seeing with the Republicans and the Senate is a total obedience to a widely corrupt leader. He and his family live above the law. They've amassed a fortune living above the law essentially. And they expect total obedience like autocrats, and if you don't fall in line, you will be humiliated, you will be isolated, you will be harassed. They have a long history of doing that.

Andrea Chalupa: And any little grievance, that perceived grievance against them, including the freedom of the Press, doing its duty to the public by reporting on their corruption and their harassment and intimidation, that is immediately attacked and they try to scapegoat members of the Press and minorities and rile up their supporters in a big frenzy of hate against them. They leverage their crowds at the rally, like a blunt force instrument to consolidate and protect their power. So all of this is being carried out under Donald Trump's Republican Party. It's worse probably than most of us are even aware.

Sarah Kendzior: It's the same pattern that we've seen continuously from the moment that he announced his campaign, and the expectation that led to his success was of course that people would step in, that they wouldn't obey, that they would not surrender, and that also that the threats of physical violence, of a surveillance of all the other mechanisms that Trump learned from people like Roy Cohn or the other mobster affiliated actors in his orbit, that they were not so bad, that people who discussed them must be exaggerating or letting on because clearly if this had all been going on, it would have come to the surface.

Sarah Kendzior: And of course it had. There were a large number of journalists who spelled out these dangers, both of Trump and the Republican Party for 40 years. A lot of times on this show people will talk about us and say, "Sarah and Andrea told us that. They weren't this or this." The reason we were able to warn you of this is because of the work of people like Wayne Barrett or David Cay Johnston or others who are covering Trump. Or Robert I. Friedman who wrote *Red Mafia*. All of this information was out there and you can combine it with seminal works on the Republican Party like *The Family* or *Dark Money*, anything that describes this emerging kleptocratic ambition that's happened over the last 40 years.

Sarah Kendzior: And in my new book, which comes out in April, I weave those two narratives together. But anyway, my point is that this wasn't inevitable, but it certainly was predictable, and you should learn from this history. Learn from the people who played down these threats, who said that this was impossible when you're

trying to predict what Trump is going to do next, especially if he is acquitted by the Senate—which it looks like, of course he will be—and he cheats his way to a second term and becomes installed as president. Because as we've warned many times before, all of these atrocities that you view as impossible are absolutely possible. And this is how autocracy rises in countries around the world. So please learn the lessons of history.

Andrea Chalupa: So you wanted to go into Adam Schiff.

Sarah Kendzior: Oh, yeah. Let's talk about Adam Schiff and some of the other people at this impeachment hearing. So Adam Schiff has been doing a really great job. You heard a viral clip of him at the beginning of the show, but as appreciative as we are, there remains the mystery of why it's taken until January 2020 for Schiff to be so consistently forceful because as we know, and as he knows, Trump and his administration have been committing crimes the entire time. You may remember that Schiff also gave a fantastic speech on March 28th, 2019 known as his It's Not Okay speech.

Adam Schiff: My colleagues may think it's okay that the Russians offered dirt on a Democratic candidate for President as part of what was described as the Russian government's effort to help the Trump campaign. You might think that's okay. My colleagues might think it's okay that when that was offered to the son of the President who had a pivotal role in the campaign, that the President's son did not call the FBI. He did not adamantly refuse that foreign help. No. Instead, that son said that he would love the help of the Russians.

Adam Schiff: You might think it's okay that he took that meeting. You might think it's okay that Paul Manafort, the campaign chair, someone with great experience in running campaigns also took that meeting. You might think it's okay that the President's son-in-law also took that meeting. You might think it's okay that they concealed it from the public. You might think it's okay that their only disappointment after that meeting was that the dirt they received on Hillary Clinton wasn't better.

Adam Schiff: You might think that's okay. You might think it's okay that when it was discovered a year later that they lied about that meeting and said it was about adoptions. You might think it's okay that the President is reported to have helped dictate that lie. You might think that's okay. I don't. You might think it's okay that the campaign chairman of a Presidential campaign would offer information about that campaign to a Russian oligarch in exchange for money or debt forgiveness. You might think that's okay. I don't.

Adam Schiff: You might think it's okay that that campaign chairman offered polling data, campaign polling data to someone linked to Russian intelligence. I don't think that's okay. You might think it's okay that the President himself called on Russia to hack his opponent's emails if they were listening. You might think it's okay that later that day, in fact, the Russians attempted to hack a server affiliated with that campaign. I don't think that's okay.

Adam Schiff: You might think that it's okay that the President's son-in-law sought to establish a secret back channel of communications with the Russians to a Russian diplomatic facility. I don't think that's okay. You might think it's okay that an associate of the President made direct contact with the GRU through Guccifer 2 and WikiLeaks that is considered a hostile intelligence agency.

Adam Schiff: You might think that it's okay a senior campaign official was instructed to reach that associate and find out what that hostile intelligence agency had to say in terms of dirt on his opponent. You might think it's okay that the National Security Advisor designate secretly conferred with the Russian Ambassador about undermining US sanctions, and you might think it's okay he lied about it to the FBI. You might say, that's all okay. You might say that's just what you need to do to win. But I don't think it's okay. I think it's immoral, I think it's unethical. I think it's unpatriotic and yes, I think it's corrupt.

Sarah Kendzior: And so once again, you hear from Adam Schiff, a very forthright, passionate plea for accountability. But after that March 2019 speech, the calls for impeachment—which is to say the calls for the highest form of accountability—stopped, including from Schiff himself. The Democrats' wavering on impeachment was both baffling and terrifying because we understood what would happen if the Democrats did not leverage the power of the house quickly and decisively. This was always a situation in which time was the enemy. And in March, Schiff certainly seem to grasp the urgency of the crisis as well as the depth of criminality at play. But after that March speech, Schiff was like a shell of himself wildly appearing on television to say he was no longer sure about whether to take decisive action.

Sarah Kendzior: There are a lot of possible reasons for this change: the influence of Nancy Pelosi, the failure of Mueller, and of course there are the threats. And so last week, we discussed how Trump and his goon squad threatened the impeachment witnesses—most notably Marie Yovanovitch—with physical violence, and how these threats followed a long career of threatening private citizens. It's also worth noting that Trump has spent his entire presidential tenure threatening members of Congress and trying to get violent followers to act.

Sarah Kendzior: Among his targets are the members of the so-called Squad like AOC and Ilhan Omar who had to have armed protection, Elijah Cummings whose home was broken into right after Trump's Twitter threat and who died a few months later with his family saying that Trump's threats contributed to his poor health. And this week, Trump threatened Adam Schiff tweeting, "Shifty Adam Schiff is a corrupt politician and probably a very sick man. He has not paid the price yet for what he has done to our country."

Sarah Kendzior: So on TV, Schiff said that he considered this tweet to be a threat and he's absolutely right. Yet no one has acted to stop it or to really protect him, and now it's been a few days and this tweet is rarely discussed. Like so many others, Schiff has been left to basically fend for himself and I'm worried about his safety.

Andrea Chalupa: I think it's important to remember that Donald Trump is an illegitimate President. He got impeached for trying to do in 2020 what he essentially got away with doing in 2016 which is getting foreign help to steal a Presidential election. So let's not forget, we've been always pointing out the June 2016 meeting in Trump Tower between Don Jr., Jared Kushner, the President's son-in-law, Paul Manafort, the Trump campaign chairman at the time, with Representatives of the Kremlin, people that are paid to further the interests of the Kremlin in the West.

Andrea Chalupa: And we've always referred to this as the quid pro quo between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin because of what happens next. About a month later, the Kremlin hands off the stolen documents and emails from the DNC stolen by Russian hackers from the DNC and hands off those materials to WikiLeaks, which then goes on to publish that material so that it will inflict maximum damage against Trump's opponents and further divide and conquer Americans against each other to help bring Trump to power.

Andrea Chalupa: And all of that was done in conjunction with a sweeping, a social media disinformation campaign, militarized propaganda across all available social media platforms, and then all other types of shenanigans of Russian hackers infiltrating election systems in all 50 States. So this whole sweeping coalition of corruption, including a mass murdering, Far Right, xenophobic terrorist regime in the form of Putin's Kremlin, all of that was done to steal the 2016 Presidential Election for Donald Trump.

Andrea Chalupa: Donald Trump is an illegitimate President and he got caught. He got caught red handed. It's all there. He tried to force through another quid pro quo, this time trying to pressure Ukraine, and he got caught red handed and that is what got him impeached. And so we've been living in America with a Constitutional crisis. Donald Trump steals the Presidential Election and everybody just lets him go through like all this was normal. Sarah and I and others who are following this very closely and being attacked with hit pieces and being harassed and getting death threats and so forth, we were living in this surreal world of feeling completely isolated.

Andrea Chalupa: It was just a horrible feeling, and the only consolation I think we have now is that now everything that we were screaming about for so long is mainstream. And we don't point that out to say we are right. We point that out, that this was all happening in the open and it could have been stopped. And so because it wasn't stopped, because you had the New York Times writing days before the 2016 election that the FBI saw no link between Trump and Russia, Sarah and I and others were screaming out that this looked absolutely crazy, and the attack pieces piled on, including from the Kremlin.

Andrea Chalupa: So what we've sort of seen and what Sarah and I now have a podcast to rage against is this horrible default in the way our institutions operate in striving to be so above board and having this institutionalized mindset. They basically carried on, instead of confronting the constitutional crisis. They tried to

essentially take baby steps to address it. President Obama on his way out, called a big investigation and called for sanctions, which Trump of course dragged his feet on because he'd be punishing his campaign mates.

Andrea Chalupa: What we then had at the start of 2019 with the Mueller Report coming out, they pounced on that and the major media with Barr's report, which ran on Barr's coverup, was picked up and repeated by the New York Times, the Washington Post and other major front pages of major newspapers saying that "Mueller exonerates Trump." Well, we know that's not true. They've been amazingly successful because our institutions were completely caught off guard by this and they're now playing catch up and the only credit I can give them, including the leading House Democrats, Pelosi and Schiff and others, is that maybe, maybe they saw this coming that they could finally, finally meet the highest, highest beyond doubt standards that our institutional mindset establishment of Washington DC abides by, that allows criminals to run amock because everything has to be done with this fake era of respectability.

Andrea Chalupa: Maybe they saw, with the trips Giuliani was taking, the meetings Giuliani was having from whatever they overheard, whatever information was being fed them, maybe they saw that Donald Trump was heading straight into a trap in the spring of 2019 where he gave them what they needed, which is finally, finally committing the crime out in the open where they have him, they have him. He did the crime there in the transcript. It's all there, the quid pro quo. It is all there. The witnesses are all there.

Andrea Chalupa: Mueller did not have enough of that to bring down Don Jr. For instance, and Ivanka and Jared, or he didn't act on it. So where Mueller fell short, the crime that finally got Trump impeached, it was a much stronger, solid case that would then lead to impeachment. And so I think optimistically that our democratic leaders saw this coming and they knew it was just a matter of time that they would just catch Trump red handed and have an open and shut case for impeachment, which would then make allowing that to go through easier. And Schiff being a man of great conviction and courage, I think that his language saying he wasn't sure about impeachment was more to set a standard, more to try to help his colleagues rise to a standard of...

Andrea Chalupa: "We're not going in there to politicize this. We're going to come to this as American Patriots. We're going to have open minds and to basically be such a strong counter to the Republicans like Mitch McConnell", who came straight out and said, "Of course we're going to have a sham election and be in the service of Donald Trump and his lawyers," where Schiff was trying to maintain the opposite of that to give greater accountability to the Democrats' case of impeachment. And I don't think it was him not understanding the urgency of the moment, I think it was him trying to raise the standards for an end to lend greater credibility to the Democrats' case for impeachment by saying he was still not convinced of impeachment.



Andrea Chalupa: I think he has been the strongest, fiercest leader in fighting with moral courage, to try to protect our country against growing autocracy. So I think Schiff was just doing this as part of a larger strategy. And I always call out the Democratic establishment when they do fall short, but I think in this case, if you look back on 2019, it's amazing how the pieces so fell into place in their favor. And I think part of that was almost waiting for Donald Trump, being the easy mark that he is, being the complete idiot that he is, to come out and do a crime on paper in the transcript that they could have such an easy open and shut case and not have to deal with the stupidity and the gaslighting and the complicit media that follows a cat laser pointer of Barr and other gaslighters and the Trump coalition of corruption. I think they needed that home run and they certainly got it and Trump delivered it for them.

Sarah Kendzior: I think that is true, that this is a clear cut crime. But as you mentioned before, there is an array of clear cut crimes that proceeded it that they didn't act on. For example, the Trump Tower meeting or firing Comey in the spring of 2017 and then confessing on television that he fired Comey because Comey was looking into his Russian crimes. And then on top of that you have Emoluments, abuse of Pardon Power, abusive migrants at the border. I think you're right that Pelosi and Schiff might've been trying to, as you said, give credibility to their case, but credibility to whom?

Sarah Kendzior: Because I think most Americans see all this with open eyes. Most Americans know that he's committing crimes because they're watching him confess to crimes. They're watching other members of this Administration flagrantly break the law, lie pathologically, do things that if any normal person did them, they would be immediately thrown into prison.

Sarah Kendzior: They've watched this endless abuse and that's why we already had, by the Fall, over half the country wanting Trump to be impeached and removed. And that number remains the same now. And so I look at Schiff and Pelosi and the rest, and I'm like, "Who are you serving? Are you serving the public or are you serving some sort of DC elite establishment whose approval you crave?" Because none of this is going to change the mind of the Republican Party. And maybe that's a delusion they had.

Sarah Kendzior: Maybe they thought that senators and others could be persuaded that if Trump does something so clear cut as you said, a crime committed on paper, that there would be no way they could acquit him because of the shame or the hypocrisy or the obligation to follow the law or any of that. All of that is out the window and it's been out the window a long time.

Sarah Kendzior: And maybe if you're in that environment, if you are in that cesspool of DC removed from everyday life, maybe you don't think so much about what effect that abuse of power has on everyday Americans. And maybe you don't know it. Maybe you become inured to it. You get used to lobbyists, you get used to dark money, you get used to constant corruption, and so this just seems like another

level. So you need to push your case even harder, make it even more dramatic. But my God, the opposite approach is what was needed.

Sarah Kendzior: It needed to be cut off before it got this big. As we've both noted many times, it needed to be cut off in 2016 when we still had an institutional apparatus that was capable of cutting out this level of corruption. Now, it is so much harder when you have agencies purged, whether it's the Russian mafia specialists in the FBI or the state department which is just Pompeo's little apparatus or most importantly, the courts. The court system, especially the Supreme Court. And I'd like to talk about John Roberts, but did you have anything you wanted to add in on that?

Andrea Chalupa: The Democrats couldn't really do much when Comey was fired because they weren't in control of the House or the Senate.

Sarah Kendzior: Oh, yeah. No, that's definitely true.

Andrea Chalupa: I think to repeat a point we always make on this show, when Comey was fired, and when all the other things started happening, and it was very clear that there was no other Trump, there would be no Trump pivot, it was more the intelligence community is largely the FBI and the DOJ and their normalcy bias and their mistaken belief that our institutions would save us when it was our institutions that underestimated the Kremlin's threat in ushering in Donald Trump's victory in 2016. And so if you examine how Trump stole the 2016 Presidential Election with the Kremlin's help,

Andrea Chalupa: what you're really examining is probably the greatest intelligence failure in world history. And of course the DOJ and the FBI whose job it was to keep us safe, they don't want to talk about how they messed up across the board. And so as a result, they put their faith in institutionalists like Rod Rosenstein and Mueller, and those guys essentially kept their heads down so they wouldn't get chopped off. And Mueller, to his credit, did more, far more, in his investigation. Rosenstein played ball with Barr and he showed his colors as a Conservative, a staunch Conservative in the pocket of the Republicans' decades long coalition of corruption that has been a deepening corruption here in America.

Andrea Chalupa: So really when we talk about the Kremlin stealing the 2016 election with Donald Trump, we're talking about a historic intelligence failure. And that's really who should have been saving us, the FBI. The Democrats did what they could with the large diverse group of leaders that they have. And when you're in a hostage situation, as we currently are now, with a Russian mafia asset in the oval office, you have to think strategically.

Andrea Chalupa: And I think so far, looking back now with the benefit of hindsight in 2019, I think the Democratic leadership, including the Progressive wing, including AOC, including Senator Warren and others that demanded impeachment, I think working together across the spectrum of the Democratic party, I think

everybody made the absolute right moves that they had to make in order to get impeachment through. And I want to just go into a little bit of that because this goes into some other stuff that we like to talk about, which is the point that this is the first Twitter impeachment. This is the first social media impeachment and here's why that matters.

Andrea Chalupa: So here are the interesting numbers from Axios. I'm quoting now directly from an article from Axios. "Interest in the Senate impeachment trial over its first three days was barely half as strong as the first three days of the House impeachment hearings." According to data from NewsWhip exclusively provided to Axios. The big picture that was by design. By blocking Democratic attempts to subpoena new documents, the Republican-controlled Senate, made sure no dramatic new information would surface during the first few days of the trial and made it easier for Americans to tune out.

Andrea Chalupa: So by the numbers, you had stories about impeachment during the first three days of the House impeachment hearings resulted in 32.5 million interactions on social media. That is extraordinary. And that goes through a point that Sarah and I have always been driving home, which is people love true crime shows, people love this stuff. So in the hands of the House, they turned the impeachment hearings into compelling true crime drama, taking on a corrupt Russian mafia asset that has stolen the White House from us and that paid off in massive viewership, so to speak, on social media.

Andrea Chalupa: So to try to counter that, Lindsey Graham, Mitch McConnell, and the rest of these Trump slaves, what they did was try to make impeachment as boring as possible and as short and unexciting as possible in the Senate, keep it nice and short and quiet. And so you saw a big ratings decline. And especially because people know that it's going to be a sham trial anyway because they made that, they said that. They told us there was going to be a sham trial. That's directly from Mitch McConnell.

Andrea Chalupa: So all of this goes to point out the fact that with this being the first Twitter impeachment, a great meme that captured this was when "Voldemort Putin" was trending on Twitter. And that is courtesy of Representative Sylvia Garcia, a Democrat of Texas, who's one of the House impeachment managers. She gives this powerful statement calling out Trump for being a weapon of Russian disinformation. And in doing so, she cites the Congressional testimony of Fiona Hill, a leading expert on Putin and the former official at the US National Security Council, who gave incredible testimony to Congress.

Andrea Chalupa: But what's really funny is that Twitter went crazy when they thought that she said Voldemort Putin. But really if you listen to the clip, she's saying Volodymyr, which is the Ukrainian version of Vladimir. So it's even a bigger troll by using the Ukrainian version of Vladimir Putin's name and not the Russian version. I mean, that would probably incense Putin more than being called Voldemort. So she probably saw Zelensky's name all around and accidentally used it in reference to Voldemort Putin. So we'll play that clip.

Sylvia Garcia: So to be really, really clear, there is no real dispute that Russia, not Ukraine, attacked our elections. But it's not just that there is no evidence to support this conspiracy theory, it's more dangerous than that because where did this theory come from? You guessed it, the Russians. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian intelligence services perpetuated this false debunked conspiracy theory.

Sylvia Garcia: Now remember, there is no dispute among the intelligence community that Russia attacked our 2016 election. The Senate's own intelligence committee published a report telling us that as well. So it's no surprise that Russia wants to blame somebody else. In fact, President Trump even said that President Putin is the one who told him it was Ukraine who interfered in our elections. In short, this theory that the Russians are promoting is to interfere yet again in our democratic process and deflect blame from their own attacks against us.

Sylvia Garcia: But what is so dangerous is that President Trump is helping them perpetuate this. Our President is helping our adversary attack our processes to help his own re-election. Dr. Hill, an expert on these matters, explains it in more detail as to why this is very concerning. Let's watch.

Fiona Hill: This relates to the second thing I want to communicate. Based on questions and statements I've heard, some of you on this committee appear to believe that Russia and its security services did not conduct a campaign against our country and that perhaps somehow for some reason Ukraine did. This is a fictional narrative that has been perpetrated and propagated by the Russian Security Services themselves. The unfortunate truth is that Russia was the foreign power that systematically attacked our democratic institutions in 2016. This is the public conclusion of our intelligence agencies confirmed in bipartisan Congressional reports.

Fiona Hill: It is beyond dispute, even if some of the underlying details must remain classified. The impacts of the successful 2016 Russian campaign remain evident today. Our nation is being torn apart. Truth is questioned. Our highly professional expert career foreign service is being undermined. US support for Ukraine, which continues to face armed aggression, has been politicized. The Russian government's goal is to weaken our country, to diminish America's global role and to neutralize a perceived US threat to Russian interests.

Sylvia Garcia: Their goal is to weaken our country, to diminish America's global role, and to neutralize a perceived US threat to Russian interests. That's why it's so dangerous.

Andrea Chalupa: The name of the game of all of this, it's not just about the Republican coalition of corruption getting away with crimes. This is about the Republican coalition of corruption getting away with crimes so they can commit more crimes. For instance, they need Paul Manafort to be pardoned and free so he can continue being an operative for the Kremlin and rake in blood money, furthering the interest of Putin's government in the West, which he did, getting paid \$10 million a year from his Kremlin handler, Oleg Deripaska, a Russian oligarch close

to Putin who made his fortune winning the Aluminum Wars in Russia, which was a mafia street fight with an actual body count.

Andrea Chalupa: Putin needs his operative, Paul Manafort, free and the Republican Party needs to get away with this so they can hold onto power and continue stealing elections and continue raking in their blood money from the American terrorist organization, the NRA, which is part of the coalition of corruption that stole the 2016 election for Donald Trump. Remember, you had Kremlin agents pollinating of this coalition through the NRA, through their useful idiots, and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa: And plus another reason why specifically I keep going back to the example of Manafort and why he needs specifically to be freed is because Giuliani sucks at his job. Parnas and Igor were caught. These guys are all amateurs compared to Manafort. Manafort is probably watching this from prison going insane. So this whole entire Ukraine conspiracy theory that the Kremlin fed Trump, that Trump and his coalition of corruption keeps repeating, the entire Ukrainian conspiracy theory is driven to not just hurt Joe Biden in the 2020 election, not just make Hunter Biden suddenly a household name that everyone knows, thinking that he's this corrupt figure.

Andrea Chalupa: Meanwhile, Ivanka and Jared are making over a hundred million dollars serving in the White House, serving their own interests in the White House. This whole Ukrainian conspiracy theory saying that Ukraine meddled in the 2016 election, not Russia, that is done so Manafort looks innocent. So people like my sister that called out Manafort based on publicly available information that anybody could have used to call out Manafort, but didn't, that's done to make her look guilty because she's Ukrainian American, and therefore a Ukrainian Illuminati.

Andrea Chalupa: And the same with Serhiy Leshchenko, a brilliant Ukrainian investigative journalist who also outed Manafort by exposing the Black Ledger, showing massive, millions of dollars of payments from Yankovich to Manafort, Putin's puppet in Ukraine, and which finally did the trick, pushing him off the campaign even though Manafort never really left because Manafort is still in the background, helping devise all this strategy to help them win. They need Manafort to be free because he's really, really good at what he does. He's really good at making it rain blood money for all of them. That's it. It's like they want to get away with crime so they can all commit more crimes and stay in power.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, absolutely. They need the institutions to be bulldozed. They need them to be purely apparatus of criminality that they can use themselves. The courts are always a bulwark against an aspiring autocracy and we've watched them fall. Not completely, but to a large degree over the last three years. And we're seeing that yet again in this shit show of a trial in which Supreme Court Justice John Roberts has been sitting there like window dressing for the defenestration of democracy.

Sarah Kendzior: For some reason, certain pundits expect Roberts to be the impeachment savior or at least to honor the law but he has no interest in honoring the law, at least

as it pertains to preserving American democracy. Roberts is part of the coalition of corruption that wants to destroy our democracy as we know it, and he's already made that clear through his prior rulings on voting rights and made clear yet again in a new Supreme Court ruling on Monday where the court ruled that immigrants now have to pass a wealth test in order to get into America.

Sarah Kendzior: So this new law is designed to screen out green card applicants, seen it being as risk of being, quote, "public charges". And it goes against everything this country and the Statue of Liberty have stood for, which is not surprising given that Stephen Miller and his fellow white supremacist lackeys in the White House have literally condemned the Statue of Liberty that most Americans have ancestors who would have not made it into America under this law, including many of Trump's own ancestors and the ancestors of other Supreme Court judges does not concern this coalition of corruption.

Sarah Kendzior: They are seeking to turn the US into a white nationalist kleptocracy and they want to codify that in law. So people need to stop having faith in John Roberts to do the job of protecting US democracy. From the start, Trump, McConnell and other Republicans had their designs on the Supreme Court. This is why Judge Kennedy, who they are likely able to control because of his connections to Deutsche Bank, resigned and was replaced with Brett Kavanaugh, who came in with a ton of debt and shady connections, and most importantly an open declaration that he would never prosecute Trump no matter what Trump did.

Sarah Kendzior: They arranged the court that way for a reason and they got that accomplished before the 2018 midterms, which brought in the Blue Wave for a reason. They needed that court control in case the Democrats initiated impeachment proceedings or took other assertive legal action. If they had thought that John Roberts was going to be a problem for them, they would have dealt with him earlier.

Andrea Chalupa: Quickly, on John Roberts, he's a reminder that we have to stay engaged with where we are now in our country for at least the next 10 years plus, because John Roberts got there on the Supreme Court in the first place because, lo and behold, the Republicans stole... I sound like, I'm like, "and then the Republicans stole this election and that election."

Sarah Kendzior: They stole a lot of elections. I mean, go on.

Andrea Chalupa: When you cannot win on the issues, you've got to steal election. That's been on record as their strategy. They steal elections. They do it across the board from gerrymandering, which the Democrats continue to take a strong stance against in recent years, which is great, but the Republicans have their racist voter ID laws. Now, they have their horrible vulnerable electronic voting machines and so forth. If you can't win on the issues, you steal elections. So John Roberts sitting up there has reminded all of us that we are in this fight for the long term and that we absolutely have to stay engaged because we thought George W. Bush was as bad as it gets with the two horrible wars that he dragged us into

that were the Pandora's Box, the apocalypse, with the rise of ISIS and so forth, and helping Wall Street to become a gambling den on steroids.

Andrea Chalupa: We thought George W. Bush was as bad as it gets and now we have Trump because we allowed George Bush and Cheney to walk free and be normalized, not held accountable for the war crimes and so forth. I mean, Halliburton made a fortune off of Bush's Forever Wars, and that was all done intentionally of course because those wars were built on lies. And so what we need is an absolute war on the lack of accountability. And so we have to stay absolutely a hundred percent engaged in this fight.

Andrea Chalupa: And that's where you start now by following your heart in the Democratic primaries. Whichever candidate speaks to you, that is your North Star. And even if they don't do well in the early states, that does not matter. Sometimes the early states do not determine who the primary winner will be. You've got to stay fighting, you've got to stay passionate and keep showing up because that is how you find your people.

Andrea Chalupa: That is it. So that's how you find your community. It's going to sustain you in the essential work that we all need to be engaged in to make sure that a George W. Bush, a Donald Trump, never happens again. That is the name of the game now. And so I want to just share really quickly a story because I like talking about my film a lot, because I'm very proud of it, but also the 14 years it took me, there was at one point coming from journalism and working with an actual fact-checking department when those things were around in a lot of newsrooms, I had a very difficult time writing a historical screenplay because I had a hard time with poetic license and accepting that I needed to do poetic license in order to make the movie work.

Andrea Chalupa: And in my initial scripts, the scripts sucked because they were so stodgy and almost written like a documentary. And so I showed the script to a friend of mine who was a struggling filmmaker by the name of Ritesh Batra. We worked together on a short film of his that nearly killed him, nearly killed him. He was driving with his actor and the actor had a seizure and ran a light and then got T-boned by a truck, and Ritesh woke up in the hospital with broken ribs and he was there for like six weeks.

Andrea Chalupa: So he was somebody who should have absolutely given up on filmmaking because he was struggling and it nearly killed him. Instead he had this passion and I was so drawn to that passion. And when he read my script he was like, "What the hell is this?" He's like, "Cut out the history lesson and just give me a good story." He was like the Patrick Swayze to my Jennifer Gray in Dirty Dancing.

Andrea Chalupa: And so I ended up listening to him. There's no reason for me to listen to him. He wasn't accomplished by any means. He just had this passion and I was drawn to that passion, and I showed up for him. I worked as a volunteer on a short film. I did what I could to help him because I believed in him. And that's a metaphor for getting involved in the Primaries now and showing up for the candidate you

believe in, showing up for the other volunteers you meet on the ground and the staffers that you believe in. Follow that passion in the democratic primaries, no matter what the polls are telling you, no matter what endorsements are coming out, just listen to that passion because that's how you're going to find your own Ritesh Batras because what ended up happening is that Ritesh Batra finally did make a feature film.

Andrea Chalupa: That film was *The Lunchbox* and it sold to Sony Pictures Classics and then he went on to direct Robert Redford and Jane Fonda in a beautiful movie called *Our Souls At Night* and I knew him way back when he was a big, fat, beautiful nobody and I trusted him and I was attracted to him because of that passion. So that's why right now follow your heart because you will find your people who you will join with and one day, 10 years from now you will wake up in a brand new country, one that you together have helped transform.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, hopefully because what we have now is basically the Republican version of *Celebrity Apprentice* where disgraced Representatives and officials are dug out from the darkest archives of history and put back in the Administration. And a key example of this undesired recycling is John Bolton, who is once again in the news. And so John Bolton has a book coming out in March. You should not buy a book from this asshole. You should also not buy into the lie that Bolton is withholding information for the purpose of his book sales.

Sarah Kendzior: And I'm going to give you an example here. Look at James Comey. It was because Comey testified under oath to Congress in 2017 that his book did so well in 2018. Now, you know that Andrea and I can't stand Comey, but he did do a good job at that early hearing and it proved that if you give honest testimony, it will help your popularity with the American book buying public. And so John Bolton is not carrying out his current actions, his current refusals to testify, his little parsing of information to various media outlets and not under Congressional Oath.

Sarah Kendzior: He's not doing that for the sales. He is a manipulative liar who is incapable of giving honest testimony unless telling the truth serves to further whatever horrible, broader agenda he has. Like, for example, furthering along his long desired Iran war. There is nothing that stopped Bolton from speaking out in August or since August. He has ignored House subpoenas and said he'd consider speaking to the GOP-dominated Senate who still won't call him.

Sarah Kendzior: Now, we're supposed to believe that Trump is deeply shaken up by Bolton's book manuscript, but honestly, this whole situation seems contrived. As I said on the last episode of *Gaslit Nation*, when the Trump Administration can't cover up crime with scandal, their next move is to cover up a big crime with a smaller crime. This was the tactic we saw in past books like Michael Wolf's fake tell-all in 2018 which hid Trump's autocratic consolidation under a veneer of chaos.

Sarah Kendzior: Bolton may be doing more of the same in his book, and he may have been genuinely opposed to Trump's actions in Ukraine, the alleged drug deal, but it's



hard to believe that his sincerity runs that deep because after all, Trump was a known Russian asset when Bolton signed on to be his advisor.

Andrea Chalupa: You can tell a lot about a person based on what they're willing to do for a book deal. The people they're willing to hurt. People are cashing in on pain of others. And don't forget that, these are blood money books. And so with that said, with not normalizing any of this, including Bolton's, the book by Dr. Strange mustache, we're going to turn to an example of moral courage. The Polish journalist, Marian Turski, who survived the Holocaust and he spoke just the other day at the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, bringing together world leaders, including Far Right autocrat, Orban, the President of Hungary, who was in the audience who desperately needed to hear this, the people propping Orban up need to hear this, including the Trumpian Polish government, which has been attacking the rights of minorities, including LGBT people.

Andrea Chalupa: So this is a very powerful statement by a Holocaust survivor, which this shouldn't be what Holocaust survivors are doing today. They should not have to be reminding us of not repeating history. We should be far from this moment in time. We should not be this close to the edge of the cliff, but unfortunately a third of the world still lives in authoritarianism, and that virus is spreading.

Andrea Chalupa: Some good news, some light in the darkness, we do have to count these moments of progress because they do matter. In the audience was also Volodymyr Zelensky, the Jewish President of Ukraine. And I pointed that out that he's Jewish because it didn't matter in a country like Ukraine, his religion did not matter. And that shows a great amount of progress. Ukraine suffered some of the greatest casualties of World War II and the interwar period. It was part of what historian Tim Snyder calls the Blood Lands and now it has a Jewish President, which I think along with other efforts that the Ukrainian government has made in recent years has gone a long way of healing with the Jewish community and the history there.

Andrea Chalupa: Of course, there's always more to be done, but we have to count the progress where it is. And then of course in the US we have Bernie Sanders who could be the next President, and no one's making a big deal about the fact that he's Jewish. Thank God. So these are signs of hope. Sarah and I grew up in an America where you had to be a white male with a Ken doll haircut and 2.5 kids and be straight and have a wife that looked like a Barbie doll.

Andrea Chalupa: That's what you look like. That was a big box that you checked for whether you were presidential or not, and it's a huge relief that here in the US we had a diverse Democratic primary and hopefully that continues, and then we have to fight for that to continue because representation, visibility, equality of course is what is going to protect us against actual authoritarianism and is an important reminder of that here is Marian Turski reminding us, calling on us to refuse to be indifferent.

- Marian Turski: Do not be indifferent when you see lies, historical lies. Do not be indifferent when you see that the past is stretched to fit the current political needs. Do not be indifferent when any minority is discriminated because the essence of democracy is that majority governs, but democracy hinges on the rights of minorities being protected and they have to be protected at the same time.
- Marian Turski: Do not be indifferent when any power or governments infringes all the social compacts that are there, that are already extant and keep the Commandment 11, thou shall not be indifferent. Because if you are, you won't even notice when you will suddenly see an Auschwitz falling down, dropping down from the skies straight on them.
- Andrea Chalupa: Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by setting up on our Patreon at the Truth Teller level or higher.
- Sarah Kendzior: We want to encourage our listeners to help the victims of the Australian fires by donating to the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Australia working on the ground to help people in need. Donate at [donate.vinnies.org.au](https://donate.vinnies.org.au). For help directed toward Australia's First Nations communities, check out the fire relief fund for First Nations communities by Neil Morris. We've posted links to these groups and others on our Patreon page.
- Andrea Chalupa: We also encourage you to donate to WIRES, a group that rescues native Australian wildlife and distress. Donate at [wires.org.au](https://wires.org.au). And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to Orangutan Project at [theorangutangproject.org](https://theorangutangproject.org). Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Kendzior and Andrea Chalupa. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes. It helps us reach more listeners. And check out our Patreon. It helps keep us going.
- Sarah Kendzior: Our production managers are Nicholas Torres and Karlyn Daigle. Our episodes are edited by Nicholas Torres and our Patreon exclusive content is edited by Karlyn Daigle.
- Andrea Chalupa: Original music in Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Visonberg, Nick Farr, Damian Arriaga, and Karlyn Daigle.
- Sarah Kendzior: Our logo design was donated to us by Hamish Smyth of the New York based firm Order. Thank you so much. Hamish.
- Andrea Chalupa: Gaslit Nation would like to thank our supporters at the producer level on Patreon.